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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on elections in the Gambia**

The European Union has taken note of the National Assembly election on 2 January 1997. The Union congratulates the people of the Gambia and the Provisional Independent Electoral Commission (PIEC) on the way the preparation and the handling of these elections have taken place. The Union considers the elections as an important step for the Gambia on its return to civilian democratic government, in spite of the ban imposed before the presidential elections, on three former political parties, their leaders and former ministers, which remains in force. The European Union hopes that the National Assembly will soon be able to fulfil the important tasks bestowed on it by the Constitution.

The European Union has welcomed the release of a number of detainees in November last and urges the Government of the Gambia to release without delay those who remain in detention for political reasons.

The European Union calls on the Gambian authorities to proceed further on its path to democracy, good governance and human rights in line with the new Constitution and is willing to reinforce its dialogue with the Gambia on these and other matters of common concern.
